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SUBJECT: IN PASSOVER INTERVIEWS, SHARON WARNS ARAFAT,  
AFFIRMS DISENGAGEMENT, SHRUGS OFF SCANDALS

1. (SBU) Israel's three major dailies previewed April 2 the separate Passover interviews with PM Sharon that each will publish on April 5. The previews highlighted three of Sharon's themes:

-- Targeting Arafat and Nasrallah: In the wake of Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin, neither Arafat nor Hizballah leader Nasrallah has "insurance against targeting." "I wouldn't suggest either of them feels immune.... Anyone who kills a Jew or harms an Israeli citizen, or sends people to kill Jews, is a marked man. Period."

-- Gaza Disengagement: "By next Passover we will be deep into disengagement." The PM insisted that he made the decision to disengage from Gaza and that he is determined to see it through: "No one influenced me and no one convinced me. That's nonsense. Arik convinced Sharon and Sharon convinced Arik. It's my decision and I intend to carry it out." The PM did not expect terrorist attacks against Israel to stop after disengagement, but did hope for a reduction. In any event, Israel's war against terror would continue, and even step up, after withdrawal from Gaza. The PM stated that the GOI does not intend to damage the electrical or water infrastructure of areas to be evacuated, and that it would continue to supply electricity and water to Gaza even after disengagement. The GOI would reconsider this service, however, if terror attacks continue from Gaza after Israel withdraws.

-- Possible Indictment: "I believe in my full and complete innocence." "I'm certain there won't be an indictment." "I'm functioning normally."

2. (SBU) Apart from their Sharon interviews, the three dailies do not appear to have any other Passover interviews of political significance in store. Ma'ariv will publish an interview with incoming IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Dan Halutz. Ma'ariv will also present an interview with former PM Barak, but the blurb promoting the interview does not suggest Barak conveying anything more than a makeover of his unlovable image. Below a photo, framed in daisy petals, of a smiling Barak clutching purple anemones appears the teaser: "Ehud Barak reveals all.... The interview we've all be waiting for in which the former PM speaks about his separation from Nava (ex-Mrs. Barak), about Nili (the new girlfriend), about aging, fears, emotional autism and the mistakes of the past."

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